WHAT IS CLAIMED IS

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    1. An information distribution method for distributing contents and advertisements from a provider to a user apparatus via a network, comprising:

10   distributing an advertisement with a format requested from the user apparatus.

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    2. The information distribution method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the format is determined depending on at least one parameter selected from a group of parameters consisting of parameters related

20 to time restrictions, parameters related to image restrictions, parameters related to attribute restrictions, and parameters related to audio restrictions.

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    3. The information distribution method as claimed in claim 1, further comprising:

30   managing points depending on the advertisement and the format; and

    controlling distribution of the contents depending on the points.

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4. The information distribution method as claimed in claim 3, wherein said managing points independently manages the points with respect to each of the contents or, manages the points in common with respect to a plurality of contents.

5. The information distribution method as claimed in claim 3, further comprising:
adjusting the points depending on specific conditions other than the advertisement and the format.

6. The information distribution method as claimed in claim 3, further comprising:
allocating surplus points to other contents if a number of points required to receive one content by the user apparatus is exceeded.

7. A computer-readable storage medium which stores a program for causing a computer to distribute contents and advertisements to a user apparatus via a network, said program comprising:
a procedure causing the computer to distribute an advertisement with a format requested from the user apparatus.

8. The computer-readable storage medium

as claimed in claim 7, wherein the format is determined depending on at least one parameter selected from a group of parameters consisting of parameters related to time restrictions, parameters

5 related to image restrictions, parameters related to attribute restrictions, and parameters related to audio restrictions.

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9.   The computer-readable storage medium as claimed in claim 7, wherein said program further comprises:

15 a procedure causing the computer to manage points depending on the advertisement and the format; and

a procedure causing the computer to control distribution of the contents depending on the points.

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10.   The computer-readable storage medium

25 as claimed in claim 7, wherein said program further comprises:

a procedure causing the computer to urge the user apparatus to specify the requested format.

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11.   An information distribution apparatus for distributing contents and advertisements from a

35 provider to a user apparatus via a network, comprising:

a unit to distribute an advertisement with a

format requested from the user apparatus.

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12. The information distribution apparatus as claimed in claim 11, wherein the format is determined depending on at least one parameter selected from a group of parameters consisting of

10 parameters related to time restrictions, parameters related to image restrictions, parameters related to attribute restrictions, and parameters related to audio restrictions.

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13. The information distribution apparatus as claimed in claim 11, further

20 comprising:
a unit to manage points depending on the advertisement and the format; and
a unit to control distribution of the contents depending on the points.

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14. A business method for providing free

30 contents service to a user by distributing contents and advertisements from a provider computer to a user apparatus via a network, and charging advertising fees for the advertisements to an advertiser, said business method comprising:

35 managing points depending on an advertisement and a format requested from the user apparatus; and
distributing the advertisement with the format

requested from the user apparatus, and controlling
distribution of the contents depending on the points.

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15. The business method as claimed in
claim 14, wherein the format is determined depending
on at least one parameter selected from a group of
10 parameters consisting of parameters related to time
restrictions, parameters related to image
restrictions, parameters related to attribute
restrictions, and parameters related to audio
restrictions.
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16. The business method as claimed in
20 claim 14, further comprising:
urging the user apparatus to specify the
requested format.

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17. The business method as claimed in
claim 14, further comprising:
charging the advertising fees for the
30 advertisement to the advertiser depending on the
points accumulated for the advertisement.

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